

Principal Developments in International Communist Affairs

(23 November-13 December 1968)

1. Czechoslovakia

The battle of the Czechoslovaks to retain some trace of individuality against the Soviet pressure to mold them into the Soviet image continues, though without spectacular moves on either side. Czech intellectuals, artists, journalists and students still show a capability for independent action and modify their protests against Russian demands only in deference to the difficulties they believe they might cause the Czech leadership.

The Czech leadership itself, with Alexander Dubcek still its head, seems to be following a new pattern: submitting its major proposals or programs to the Soviet leadership before they are promulgated as official policy in Czechoslovakia. The Czech leaders confirmed what was rumored at the time, that they had indeed consulted with Brezhnev in Warsaw before formalizing the resolutions of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee plenum held 12-14 November. The leadership again consulted with the Soviet leaders, this time in Kiev during the first week of December, when the Soviets were represented, inter alia, by Pyotr Shelest, reputedly one of the toughest of the Soviet "hard-liners." This time the agenda is thought to have concerned a request for Soviet approval of the plan for federalizing Czechoslovakia. This new pattern, and the secrecy attending these meetings, seem to represent the ever-decreasing independence of action of the Czech leadership.

Also, many take it as an ominous sign that at this last meeting with the Soviets, Joseph Smrkovsky, a strong-minded liberal in the Czech leadership, was omitted from the Czech delegation. Still representing the old group were Dubcek, Cernik, and Svoboda. Two newer figures, thought to be more "realist," i.e., more inclined to agree regularly with Moscow, were also in attendance: Gustav Husak and Lubomir Strougal, the latter elevated out of nowhere to the prestigious post, among other jobs, of membership in the 8-man Executive Committee (top body) of the Politburo.

The Soviets seem to be moving quietly but steadily toward their goal of extirpating the Czech experiment.

2. International CP Relations

After the Preparatory Commission meeting of the World Communist Conference 18 November, Moscow gave every indication of satisfaction and relief that it had succeeded in getting a show of unanimity by such a large group of parties (67 in all) and a commitment to hold the full-scale conference next May. At the same time, Moscow was able to keep a clamp on the deep disagreements over Czechoslovakia between the Soviet Bloc

parties (the CPSU, Poland's PZPR, East Germany's SED, Hungary's MSZMP, and Bulgaria's BCP) on the one hand, and most parties of West Europe on the other, among the latter the politically important mass parties of France (PCF) and Italy (PCI).

However, there are signs even now, though admittedly inconclusive, that the CPSU may have considerable difficulty in maintaining even the appearance of unanimity on certain matters of real substance and importance to the Soviet Union. The old dissensions with parties in power -- including those of China, Albania, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia -- remain. And the disagreements with the PCF and the PCI, as well as with the important Japanese Communist Party (JCP) are far from settled. It may be that early indications of PCF and PCI willingness gradually to mend their relations with the CPSU (in the face of the considerable financial pressure which the CPSU reportedly threatened) may not carry through -- sentiment against doing so appears quite strong. However, the outcome is by no means certain. The early months of the coming year should bring interesting developments.

There seems to be little doubt that the great majority of the parties which will attend the full-scale Moscow Conference in May recognize, however reluctantly, the overwhelming military, industrial and diplomatic power of the Soviet Union; they need Soviet support against Western "imperialists," as well as financial, organizational, training, and other assistance.

Such formal unity, however, does not provide genuine solutions for the Sino-Soviet conflict, for the tensions between the Soviet Bloc and Yugoslavia, for the liquidation of the Czech crisis, or for the internal difficulties (intellectual dissent, apathy of youth, need for economic reforms, etc.) besetting the Communist-ruled countries.

### 3. Round-up of Soviet Foreign Relations

It has been widely said that the Soviet Union has striven hard to restore a "business-as-usual" basis for its dealings with the West since its action in Czechoslovakia. It has concurrently enforced an ideological rigidity resembling Stalinism in the Communist world: its tight controls at the World Communist Conference preparatory meeting, an uncompromising attitude toward dissenting free world parties, inexorable pressure in Czechoslovakia, and unremitting and repeated demands for orthodoxy at home have contrasted with most of its moves vis-a-vis the free world. On the latter front, the Soviets have attempted to promote a selective detente -- that is with certain countries on certain issues (but not a general, across the board detente, as some newspapers and commentators are wont to intimate). Thus they have pressed forward with matters they deem to be clearly in their interest, such as the nuclear test ban treaty and the resumption of talks with France on economic and technical cooperation. And they have apparently attempted to avoid new provocations of the free

world which could add to their problem of sweeping the Czechoslovak mess under the rug. But, at the same time, they have not abandoned their expansionist ambitions or their constant probing for soft spots in the free world's armor. This has been evident in such places as Algeria and the Sudan, and also in Nigeria, where the Soviets have made startling progress by furnishing arms to help suppress the hapless Biafrans.